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ABSTRACT

As teacher educators have worked to encourage teachers to become more reflective, they have noted the important role school context plays in supporting or constraining reflection in action. This study describes one kindergarten teacher's experiences in two contrasting school contexts. The study documents the characteristics of leadership style and of school organization and resources, and processes of communication between faculty and administrators and of curriculum decision making that promoted or hindered this teacher's ability to reflect. These differences had an impact on the curriclum provided by the teacher, on her ability and willingness to accept responsibility for her professional decisions and on her self-confidence and satisfaction with teaching. The discussion of the contrasting features of the school contexts is divided into four sections: contrasting leadership style, school organization and resources, teacher communication with administration, and curriculum decision making. (JD)

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TRUST VERSUS CONTROL: THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHER REFLECTION

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TRUST VERSUS CONTROL: THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHER REFLECTION

Teacher educators have been working to define reflection (Grimmett et al., 1987; Ross, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) and to help preservice and/or inservice teachers practice reflection in action. As teacher educators have worked to encourage teachers to become more reflective, they have noted the important role school context plays in supporting or constraining reflection in action. This study describes one kindergarten teacher's experiences in two contrasting school contexts. The study documents the characteristics of leadership style and of school organization and resources, and processes of communication between faculty and administrators and of curriculum decision making that promoted or hindered this teacher's ability to reflect.

For the purpose of this paper reflection is defined as a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices (Goodman, 1984; Ross, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). The elements of the reflective process include (although not necessarily in this order): recognition of educational dilemmas, responding to a dilemma by recognizing both the similarities to other situations and the unique qualities of the particular situation, framing and reframing the dilemma, experimenting with the dilemma to discover the consequences and implications of various solutions, examining the intended and unintended consequences of an implemented solution and evaluating the solution by determining whether the consequences are desirable or not.

Schon (1983) stresses that reflective practice is grounded in the practitioner's appreciation system (i.e. repertoire of values, knowledge, theories and practices). The appreciation system of the teacher influences the types of dilemmas that will be recognized, the way teachers frame and reframe dilemmas, and

the judgments teachers make about the desirability of various solutions. For example, Liston and Zeichner (1987) note that teachers must use moral as well as educational criteria in examining the consequences of implemented solutions. This suggests that if the leadership of a school is to support the ongoing development of reflection they must share this perspective on ethical decision making with the teacher.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Background for the Study

Prior to this study, this teacher had taught young children in a private school setting using whole language approaches for teaching reading and writing and problem solving approaches for teaching mathematics. Although she had evidence that her children were learning and support from parents, she returned to graduate school to learn more about the approaches, to learn their theoretical rationale, and to explore their application to diverse populations of children. After completing her Masters' degree she sought and obtained a job at Northside Elementary[1] for the 1985-1986 school year where she hoped to implement and assess the impact of the strategies she had learned. One indication of her level of reflection and her commitment to professional growth is that she participated in the present collaborative study of her teaching during that year, her first in a public school classroom. Another is that the faculty with whom she worked in graduate school considered her one of their most reflective graduates.

Faced with several mandates that conflicted with her beliefs about how young children learn, and repeated observations by the schools' administrators, this teacher learned to conform to the expectations at Northside but she felt that she was forced to compromise some of her most fundamental beliefs about teaching.

[1] The names of the schools and all school personnel have been changed to protect anonymity.

Because of her dissatisfaction she decided to return to graduate school and began work on a graduate degree. After one year of graduate school, she sought a position at Canter Elementary, (a university lab school) for the 1987-1988 school year. This context provided support for professional growth, opportunities for faculty collaboration, and encouragement for the teacher to be autonomous and experiment with her teaching strategies.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data sources for 1985-1986 school year (Northside Elementary) included twenty five hours of taped interviews between the teacher-researcher and the university researcher, minutes from faculty meetings, notes from supervisory conferences, and written feedback from administration. Sources of data for the 1987-1988 school year (Canter Elementary) included the teacher's curriculum journal, minutes from faculty meetings, notes from supervisory conferences, written feedback from administration, and the teacher's interviews with other faculty members. These interviews were used to confirm her perceptions and beliefs about the nature of the school environment.

All interview data were transcribed and data analysis was conducted collaboratively by the teacher and university researchers. Patterns and themes were developed from the data using an adaptation of Spradley's (1980) procedure for qualitative data analysis. In brief, the data were analyzed to find relevant domains of behavior and language. Several taxonomies of domains were constructed and ultimately the taxonomies were placed within the cultural theme of trust versus control.

REFLECTION AND CONTEXT: DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT OF TWO CONTRASTING SCHOOL CONTEXTS

Data analysis revealed striking contrasts between the two schools. These differences had a impact on the curriculum provided by the teacher, on her ability and willingness to accept

responsibility for her professional decisions and on her self-confidence and satisfaction with teaching. The discussion of the contrasting features of the school contexts is divided into four sections: leadership style, school organization and resources, communication processes, and curriculum decision making processes. However, context cannot really be divided into pieces. Context is experienced as a gestalt, with each piece intertwining with and influencing the others. This will be apparent throughout the paper. School leadership is discussed first, because leadership style is perceived to have a pervasive impact on school context. Each relevant feature is clarified with representative examples from the data. Examples were selected based on typicality within each context.

Contrasting Leadership Styles

Differences in leadership style can be noted beginning with hiring procedures. The principal at Northside, Mrs. Miller, seemed to view the interview process as a means for communicating expectations and "filling an empty slot." During the interview Mrs. Miller communicated her expectations in several ways. For example, she stated that each "teacher should do what she is supposed to," and "teach just like the other kindergarten teachers." Additionally, the principal asked the teacher, Lynda, if she knew about assertive discipline and told her, "That's what we use here." Questions not asked or pursued demonstrate the lack of interest in the philosophical stance of the teacher. The principal asked no questions about Lynda's pedagogical beliefs. When discussing assertive discipline Mrs. Miller did not ask Lynda what she thought about the system or how it might promote student learning. In addition, Mrs. Miller did not seem to use information provided by Lynda which might have given her insight into the teacher's belief system. Lynda left a copy of a whole language unit she had compiled, presented at a conference, and previously taught. The fact that Mrs. Miller called the school board office and hired Lynda within fifteen

minutes of the end of the interview suggests that this information, which might have suggested that this teacher would not fit into the existing teaching context, was not reviewed.

At Canter, the hiring process was a lengthy one designed to ensure a philosophical alignment between the prospective teacher and the mission of the school. Before Lynda was hired, she was asked to spend a couple of days observing in the school to determine whether her philosophy about teaching and learning was similar to that demonstrated in the school. The administration expressed the belief that it was important for teachers to share common beliefs about learning and common goals for young children. This unity of focus, they felt, would provide the best atmosphere for both teaching and learning. Another example of their concern for finding a teacher who would fit philosophically within the school is exemplified by the fact that Lynda was not hired until she completed three interviews.

Differences suggested in the contrasting hiring procedures manifested themselves in differences in leadership style. A leadership style characterized by a high level of control throughout all facets of the Northside school environment contrasts with the trust the leadership of Canter Elementary invests in its faculty. Within the first two weeks at Northside Lynda noted many strict procedures regarding classroom life that were both monitored and enforced by the principal. Indications of administrative concern for control included: planbooks had to be turned in every Monday to be read by the principal, parent newsletters were to be read and reviewed by Mrs. Miller before they were sent home, and keys to classroom closets were to be left in the teachers' mailboxes every night. If this was forgotten a note was left in the box emphasizing that the key must be left at school. Children were assigned numbers by the cafeteria workers and were required to stand in line and go to lunch in numerical order. When Lynda asked about changing two of the children who were having trouble standing together in the lunch line she was told that no changes could be made.

In addition, Lynda was told on several occasions by Mrs. Miller that the kindergartens should all be the same. For example, during rest time the children were required to sit in a chair with heads down on the table. In an effort to provide a more conducive environment for resting, Lynda had her children look at books while lying on new carpet samples. She was later informed that the children must be seated in chairs at the tables. This concern for commonality was repeated by the other kindergarten teachers during several grade level planning sessions. Grade level planning was mandated by Mrs. Miller. During one episode in November it became evident that the emphasis on common planning was a means for maintaining control over teachers.

Prior to this day, Lynda had experimented with several formats for learning centers in an effort to meet the needs of the students, provide some opportunity for students to make choices, and improve her classroom management. By November she had designed a format that seemed to be effective in accomplishing each of these goals. Mrs. Miller, who had not collected planbooks for two weeks, walked into the classroom to discover that things had changed:

> [She] walked in the room during the time when they choose a center and freaked out. She said, "Where's your planbook? Let me see your plans. What are these children doing? They're not doing anything in here."...some of the children were playing in housekeeping, and some were playing in the blocks, and I hadn't gotten to the point where I could go around and work on skills. They were still learning how to make a choice. So she freaked out, ran into [the other kindergarten teacher's] room, ran back in my room, back and forth, back and forth.....The curriculum resource teacher comes in and asks where are

> the old lesson plans [from previous years].-....[Mrs. Miller] said, "They are not learning anything in here!" I said, "Sure they are," and I explained to her how we were working on the skills in another way

Mrs. Miller's need to control the students as well as the teachers pervades the organization of the school and can be sensed through the statements she made above. On this occasion in November the principal and curriculum resource teacher expressed concern that Lynda was not planning with the other kindergarten teachers because her classroom did not look like the other kindergartens. If this teacher were "filling in the slot" then her classroom would be the same as the others.

The contrast between an environment of control and one of trust was apparent to Lynda from her first days at Canter. When she began preparing for kindergarten screening at this school, she felt a need to clarify the procedures with the administration. The kinds of questions that were asked were influenced by the many controlling procedures at Northside. For example, Lynda asked about the procedures for signing in and out, whether or not it was possible to schedule a doctor's appointment during pre-planning week, and whether or not teachers turned in their planbooks. The principal's response to her questions about screening procedures (e.g. whether or not to include a measure of fine motor development) exemplifies the environment of trust. The principal's immediate response was, "We trust you to make good, professional decisions, so do what you feel is best for the children."

The trust invested in the faculty at Canter can be observed throughout many aspects of school life. Teachers are trusted to come and go as needed before and after the school day based on the assumption that "you are a professional and you are accomplishing what you need to accomplish to do an exemplary job." If a teacher needs to leave during the school day for some reason, he or she is trusted to make sure the class is covered,

and then checks out in the office and informs the principal. Planbooks are never collected, and parent newsletters are simply put into the principal's mailbox at the same time letters are sent home to parents (for information purposes). Class schedules are developed by the principal in collaboration with the elementary faculty chairperson using input from the teachers. As much as possible, the scheduling priorities of the classroom teachers are met first.

The contrast in leadership style also manifested itself in the manner in which faculty meetings were conducted in each school. At Northside, the principal conducted the faculty meeting by reading off a list of announcements. Little or no time was provided for discussion and this was generally appreciated by the faculty. The primary objective seemed to be to end the faculty meetings as quickly as possible. On only one occasion did Lynda note teacher discussion at a faculty meeting. This discussion focused on answering a question about whether the carpeting went halfway up the walls in the classrooms. Mrs. Miller played a major role in extending the time spent on this discussion. Clearly faculty meetings at Northside were not a place for teacher decision making or input.

Faculty meetings at Canter, conducted by the elected faculty chair, provided a forum for teachers to raise questions and concerns, and to participate in policy decisions. The day before a school-wide faculty meeting elected teacher representatives met with administrators to set the agenda for the meeting. By sharing concerns with their division's elected representative, teachers played a dominant role in developing the agenda. Administrators attended faculty meetings and often raised issues on which they desired teacher input before making a decision. Faculty meetings at Canter tended to be longer than those at Northside, however they were consistently issue oriented and provided a means to gather teacher feedback and input. Clearly the administration trusted its faculty to organize and conduct its faculty meetings and valued their input about school issues.

Research suggests that school environments which support teacher reflection are led by strong, supportive administrators (Hall, 1987; Wildman & Niles, 1987) who value teacher decision-making (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Goodman, 1987; Wildman & Niles, 1987), teacher colleagiality (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Goodman, 1987; Wildman & Niles, 1987), and the norm of continuous improvement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Goodman, 1987; Wildman & Niles, 1987). In addition, they work collaboratively with other staff members to initiate and sustain school improvement efforts (Hall, 1987). The organization of the faculty meetings at Canter to promote teacher discussion and decision making provides evidence of the leadership's attempt to facilitate teacher reflection. By contrast, the leadership at Northside controlled faculty meetings and organized them in a way which implied decisions were made by the school's leadership and discouraged the development of teacher reflection.

Supporting or Constraining Reflection: School Organization and Resources

There are many ways in which the leadership of a school can provide support for reflection through the school's organization and the resources made available. If teachers are not provided time for reflection (Wildman & Niles, 1987) or flexibility in the use of curricular resources (Ross, et al., forthcoming), reflection is less likely to occur. What resources and organizational supports did these administrators provide?

The provision of time for teachers at Northside to plan together could provide opportunities for teacher reflection and exchange of ideas (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Klausmeier, 1982). In addition, activity periods (such as music, art, and p.e.) were scheduled at the same time for each grade level in order to provide more time and support for grade level planning. Planning periods did provide a context for reflection to occur. Lynda found team planning sessions to be the most reflective experiences she had at Northside. For example, Lynda described one

session where she shared her ideas about teaching letters within a context of meaning.

> I have been having the children look for the letter form within the context of rhymes, fingerplays and songs that they already know. .....And Sue said, "Come on Tony, we really should do this. And this week we are doing 'E' and I was talking about the things I was doing, and they said, "O.K., O.K. but I don't want to do that quite like that but I'll do it like this. So they are thinking of ways to try whole language too.

However, as the previous example in November indicated, there is some question about the administrator's purpose for encouraging team planning.

In addition to having common planning time, the teachers Northside taught in open-space classrooms. There is research suggesting that common space can encourage reflection by providing teachers an opportunity to observe each other, explore alternatives, and discuss their strategies and concerns (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1978). In addition, they may increase their knowledge of intended and unintended consequences of practices (Ross, 1978). For Lynda, at Northside, these types of reflective experiences did not occur. Instead, she was faced with frustrations relating to excessive classroom noise and severe limitations in scheduling. Ross, Bondy & Kyle (forthcoming) suggest that these factors serve to limit teacher reflection.

Though common planning times did not exist at Canter, and common planning was stressed less than teacher autonomy, there were numerous occasions in which groups of teachers were encouraged to meet to discuss issues and make recommendations. The identification of issues or dilemmas commonly perceived by a group of teachers provided support for teacher reflection. For example, kindergarten through third grade teachers met to acquire new information about the Writing to Read program and to discuss

individual teacher's goals and concerns about the program. Each spring teachers met with their own division (primary, elementary, middle, or high school) to discuss a comprehensive growth plan for the school and to make recommendations for school improvement for the following year. Issues that were discussed during these meetings were determined by the teachers.

An additional way to provide time and support for reflection is to hire classroom aides to assist teachers. The administration at Canter was committed to providing this assistance. However, at Northside the provision of aides did not appear to be a priority. The stated policy was that any kindergarten teacher with more than twenty five children would receive a full time aide. However, the principal consistently overloaded one of the kindergarten classrooms rather than distributing the children equally and therefore was only required to hire one aide. Beginning on the first day of school Lynda teacher found the lack of assistance a barrier to her ability to meet the needs of individual children within the classroom.

The types of materials provided and expectations about their use also have an impact on reflection (Ross et al., forthcoming). At Northside, Lynda felt overwhelmed by the number of units, kits, and curriculum guides that she was expected to use during the school year. Though the kits and guides provided at Northside required some reflection in order to decide which activities to use, they also limited the realm of choices. For example, the majority of the kits were designed for teacher-centered, direct instruction with large groups of children. Additionally, the mandated reading program was a skills based, phonics and letter centered approach to beginning reading which often frustrated Lynda's attempts to implement a whole language program.

In contrast, when Lynda began teaching at Canter, she quickly discovered that although there were many materials available, each teacher decided which resources to use. For example, the "Letter People" (a program designed to teach letters and sounds) program was historically used in the kindergarten

classes. When Lynda discussed her desire to implement a whole language approach, she received strong support from the administration to disregard the "Letter People" program and implement her own approach.

Wildman and Niles (1987) stress that schools must allocate time and resources if reflection is to occur. Both of these schools found ways to provide time for teachers to work collaboratively and ample resources for teachers to use. However, this study demonstrates that time and resources are not enough. School organization can be used to control teachers as happened at Northside, or to provide opportunities for teachers to participate actively in decision-making.

Teacher Communication with Administration

Schon (1987) suggests that if reflection is to occur, common meaning must be established between the coach and student, or in this case between school leaders and teachers. Communication with the administration at Northside did not encourage the collaborative construction of common meaning. Instead, the dynamics of communication at Northside always seemed to result in misunderstanding and conflict. In contrast, communication with the leadership at Canter was characterized by an examination of classroom life in light of the teacher's philosophy about good teaching and how young children learn. Common meaning was quickly established. While the style of communication at Canter stimulated reflection, communication with the leadership at Northside frustrated teacher reflection and eventually reduced the number of risks taken by the teacher.

Communication between Lynda and the leadership at Northside was typified by mandates, negative feedback concerning her control over the students, and demands for instant change in classroom procedures. After Mrs. Miller's discovery in November that Lynda's classroom was different, Lynda was observed almost daily for three weeks and met on several occasions with the curriculum resource teacher, the principal, and the school

district's reading specialist. During one of these meetings, the principal stated:

> Your philosophy and my philosophy are very different. You need to change your philosophy to mine. I want you to do what I want you to do. I want these children ability grouped. I want them rotating in centers. You are to be just like [the other kindergarten teachers] and do the same thing they are doing.

Little effort was made by the principal to listen to the teacher's concerns or her aims in teaching. When Lynda attempted to share reasons for her practices, Mrs. Miller tended to dismiss them or to dictate alternative practices.

> [I told Mrs. Miller that] I sat on the rug and passed out sheets one by one so [the children] would be ready and quiet [when they went to a table to work].....[She said] "O.K. I can see why you did that, there was a good reason, but I want the materials on the table."

Similarly, the resource teacher showed little interest in Lynda's educational aims. During every conversation Lynda had with the leadership at Northside she tried to explain her aims and how her practices were designed to accomplish those aims. However, the curriculum resource teacher asked few questions and provided little help during these discussions. In fact, the resource teacher made many suggestions which were inconsistent with Lynda's aims. For example, when Lynda shared that one of her frustrations was not having enough time for children to complete all of the activities during center time, the curriculum resource teacher suggested that Lynda shift art to the afternoon and use patterned art activities, a practice that violated Lynda's beliefs about the nature of art, the purpose of providing art activities and the nature of good early childhood education.

When the curriculum resource teacher became concerned about Lynda's classroom management she suggested that Lynda "read the book and view the tapes" on assertive discipline. Discussion about the philosophy and goals of the program was strongly discouraged as the curriculum resource teacher shared that she had taught kindergarten for many years and had tried many discipline systems, and "this was the best."

Lynda attempted to establish common meaning with the school's leadership on many occasions by sharing her aims and trying to understand their concerns and suggestions. However, when Lynda was consistently faced with mandates and no effort was made by the administration to listen, Lynda began to react defensively or to listen passively during conferences.

Blumberg (1980) in his study of supervisory styles suggests that the supervisor sets the tone of conferences. Gibb (1961), suggests that supervisory behavior that is defense inducing is typified by control, strategy, superiority, certainty, neutrality, and evaluation. Many of the responses from the leadership at Northside conveyed this tone. Lynda recalls a confrontation with the resource teacher that produced defensive behavior.

> When I was sitting with the curriculum resource teacher she said, "You are so defensive," which is true. Then I said, "Yeah because all I get is negative [feedback]." And then she said, "Well....." She more or less said there is nothing positive to say.

The curriculum resource teacher's belief that "there is nothing positive to say" was difficult for Lynda to understand. This was her fourth year of teaching and she had previously received a great deal of praise and support for her teaching. The lack of positive feedback made it difficult for Lynda to communicate with the administration without being defensive.

A supervisory style that is typified telling and criticizing provokes defensive responses (Blumberg, 1980) and provides little

support for reflection. In contrast, supervisory conferences at Canter can be characterized by Blumberg's (1980) definition of a "low direct, high indirect" supervisory style. A supervisor who maintains this type of communication asks questions, listens, and reflects back the teacher's ideas and feelings. Many of the conversations Lynda had with administrators at Canter had these characteristics. In post observation conferences the observer reviewed the lesson and classroom events, asked clarifying question, and helped Lynda reflect about her aims. For example, Lynda's supervisor was clearly aware of her aim to meet the needs of individual children through mixed ability groups and often provided support in her comments:

> Because of the structure of your lesson, students of all developmental levels were able to successfully work on the same objectives... The methods you used to individualize for each student while working with the whole group on the same objective were very effective.

Suggestions for improvement were always made in a manner that supported Lynda's efforts.

> I observed during your table math time, several students calling out "Mrs. Hayes! Mrs. Hayes!" or getting up to come to you. If this is bothersome, you may want to establish a procedure of only going to students who raise their hands for attention.

Supervisory conferences that support teacher reflection, require an environment of trust (Goodman, 1985). In addition, dissent and conflict should be allowed (Goodman, 1984), and experimentation should be reinforced (Goodman, 1985). Leadership at Northside, which emphasized uniformity, provided little tolerance or support for experimentation and dissent. However, the leadership at Canter encouraged dissent and conflict and consistently reinforced experimentation by its teachers. For example,

Lynda designed and implemented a highly successful whole language curriculum during her first year at Canter. Her alternative strategies were recognized and encouraged by the administration in ways such as providing leave time for her to share the information with other teachers and paying for a substitute so that she could improve her mathematics program.

Common meaning collaboratively constructed between the school's leadership and a teacher provides the foundation for teacher autonomy, experimentation, and reflection. According to Dewey (1933), reflection begins with an experienced dilemma. The lack of communication at Northside meant that the leadership was unable to perceive the dilemmas Lynda experienced. For example, the demand by the administration to place the children in ability groups was inconsistent with Lynda's beliefs that ability groups undermine the achievement and self esteem of students. The mandate to "put these children in ability groups" evolved from the inability of the administration to view the same dilemma Lynda perceived and an unwillingness to understand her reasons for mixed ability groups.

At Canter, however, Lynda and the school's administration often engaged in conversations concerning dilemmas which were perceived by both. For example, Lynda's aim to maintain mixed ability groups continued into her teaching at Canter. In this environment she received support for experimenting with strategies which would meet the needs of individual children yet allow them to remain in mixed ability groups. On several occasions the teacher's supervisor noted her success with alternative strategies and encouraged her to share them with others. Lynda's feelings of professional success in her first year of teaching at Canter were encouraged by a communication style which supported risk taking, and the discussion of philosophy and aims. At Northside, however, feelings of success were frustrated by the administration's inability to listen to Lynda and <u>hear</u> what she was saying. Only by listening effectively can common meaning be pursued.

Curriculum Decision Making

Differences in the structure of faculty meetings, discussed earlier, suggest that teachers were expected to participate in organizational and curricular decisions at Canter but not at Northside. Much of the conflict that occurred between Lynda and the leadership at Northside was because she made autonomous decisions, while most of the positive feedback she received at Canter was in strong support of such decisions. Interestingly, at least initially, the decisions she made within the two schools were similar and focused on teaching whole language and math problem solving and developing a discipline plan that emphasized the development of self-esteem and individual responsibility. For each school examples of specific decisions will be discussed in conjunction with the school-wide goals which influenced those decisions.

Curriculum decision making rests upon not only the teacher's goals, but also those of the school. The nature of school-wide goals and how they are communicated clearly influences decision making. Lynda attempted to make decisions which reflected her goals as well as those of the school and the school district. However, at Northside many of these decisions were based on perceptions of school goals as opposed to concrete knowledge because conversations with the school's leadership did not establish common meaning. Though school were never clearly stated, they were communicated through mandates, voiced concerns, feedback to the teacher, and schoolwide policies.

Data analysis suggests the most important school-wide goal was to maintain control of students. Assertive discipline was established and enforced throughout the school. Rules and consequences were posted in the hallway, cafeteria, classrooms, the music room, and the art room. The goals of "quiet and order" applied to <u>all</u> children, including kindergartners entering school for the first time. For example, if a kindergarten child was not standing quietly in the line, Mrs. Miller would threaten to "straighten the child up" and/or "paddle him." The threat of

paddling seemed to provide immediate control for Mrs. Miller. The implied goal each time was to take control of the child as opposed to helping the child take control of himself.

When Lynda finally felt the need to conform to the school's assertive discipline policy, she turned in her plan to the principal and noted that Mrs. Miller's primary concern was with the punishment consequences. Mrs. Miller's focus on the consequences clearly communicates the primacy of the goal of control.

Lynda experienced some problems in classroom management during her year at Northside, in large part because the procedures required by assertive discipline did not match her beliefs about meeting children's needs. Though she was required to implement assertive discipline, Lynda tried to provide a learning experience for her students within the program by using supplemental strategies. One strategy she used with some success was having the children write or draw a plan for their behavior when they went to the time-out chair. This strategy is supported by Cornell (1986). Lynda shared what she was doing with another teacher who warned:

> Don't let them [Mrs. Miller and the curriculum resource teacher] know that you've changed, because then they will think something is wrong with you.

Perhaps what is really "wrong" with Lynda, is that she can not adequately "fill the slot" in this school. If one is to teach in this school, then one must not make decisions or modifications, one must follow the curricular and management policies.

Some of the misunderstandings regarding Lynda's curricular decisions were based on the school leadership's seeming support of the district's suggestions for curricular changes in the kindergarten program. The district provided monthly inservice opportunities in which teachers exchanged ideas relating to the district's emphasis on whole language and a manipulative based approach to mathematics. The district supported this change by providing supplies such as manipulatives and "housekeeping"

furniture. Because the districts's aims were similar to Lynda's, she implemented many of the suggested changes in her classroom.

Initially the leadership at Northside seemed supportive of the changes. The curriculum resource teacher made a decision to purchase only seven math workbooks (as opposed to 25) for each kindergarten. Lynda was relieved and stated: "It suited me just fine [because] that means no pressure on me to do those worksheets." When confrontations with the school's leadership began in November, however, the curriculum resource teacher seemed to change her message about the thrust of the math program. She expressed concerns about the classroom noise level and the lack of drill on numerals. Apparently, the noise that accompanies a manipulative based program conflicted with the school-wide goal to maintain control. While discussing her concerns, the curriculum resource teacher suggested to Lynda that a manipulative program would be best accomplished by "manipulatives at one table and dittos at the next." The dittos would help to reestablish quiet and order.

In addition, the resource teacher believed worksheets would help children achieve the second schoolwide goal, "passing tests." On several occasions the resource teacher expressed concern that changes in curriculum might impede children's performance on tests. An incident in October is illustrative. During planning meetings, Lynda persuaded the other kindergarten teachers to teach letter recognition within a meaningful context. However, this change which was consistent with current whole language research precipitated an immediate confrontation with the curriculum resource teacher. A meeting of all the kindergarten teachers was called so that she could express her concerns that children, especially low achieving children, need to be taught letters in isolation, as opposed to learning them within the context of a known fingerplay.

> She says, "There are no boundaries. There are no lines. There is too much on this piece of paper.....I can't imagine that the kids can

> do it without being frustrated." I shared, "It's phenomenal to me, but they do it [find and circle the letter as they "read" the fingerplay or song].....Sue said, "The kids love the papers. The ones who have trouble with the [published reading program] don't have trouble with these papers." The curriculum resource teacher just couldn't see how they wouldn't be frustrated. We told her to come observe.....She wanted to trash them, but she finally said it would be o.k. if we would draw lines on them.

Once again, the administration mandated a decision which served to further limit teacher reflection at this school. Additionally, the confrontation itself, like the structure of faculty meetings, communicated to teachers an expectation that they not make significant changes or curricular decisions.

In contrast to the lack of support for teacher made curricular decisions at Northside, Lynda received a great deal of support for the decisions she made at Canter. Lynda was able to seek and receive this support because of her clear understanding of and support for school-wide goals. The school-wide goals were clearly stated and understood at Canter. Every program or curriculum strategy adopted by the school emphasized the primary goal of meeting the needs of the whole child. Programs that were adopted school-wide helped teachers to attain this goal.

Many examples of the emphasis on the individual child were discussed with Lynda beginning during the interview process. For example, the school's focus on using learning styles research provided curricular support for teachers in their aim to meet the needs of each child. Examples of curricular decisions Lynda made in an effort to achieve the goal of educating the whole child included adjustments that she made in her classroom management strategies, and strategies that she developed to meet the needs of low achieving children. In her attempt to meet the emotional

needs of individual children in her classroom management program, Lynda found that she needed to make some adjustments in the Responsibility Training program. For example, one child disrupted the class on many occasions and had difficulty concentrating and participating cooperatively in classroom activities. Lynda discussed the situation with the guidance counselor and set up special counseling sessions for this child to improve his self concept and self esteem. This strategy helped the child to improve his behavior in the classroom.

In her quest to meet the needs of low achieving children, Lynda sought ways to provide extra assistance for these students. After having several discussions with an administrator about her concerns, Lynda and the administrator designed a program in which this administrator provided additional instruction for the children.

The other primary goal of Canter is for teachers to participate in "research and dissemination" of teaching strategies supported in research and/or theory. Teachers are encouraged to be familiar with current research and to take risks in their teaching by implementing new strategies. This kind of support has been cited as a component that encourages the development of teacher reflection (Wildman & Niles, 1987; Ross, in press). Clearly support for risk taking and proposing alternative strategies existed at Canter.

For example, one required curriculum program in the primary grades is "Writing To Read." Though the program has many components of a whole language approach, Lynda spent many hours discussing with her supervisor her ideas for achieving a closer alliance between the whole language philosophy and the Writing to Read program. By sharing her views, and citing supportive research, Lynda gained the support of her supervisor to make adjustments in the program. These experiments with alternative strategies helped Lynda to achieve her aim and resulted a tremendous amount of success for her children in the Writing to Read program.

There seem to be several reasons why Lynda received administrative support for making curricular decisions at Canter but not at Northside. First, there was a philosophical match between Lynda's goals and the school's goals at Canter; whereas at Northside Lynda was unable to share the school's focus on the need for order and control. Second, the nature of supervisory conferences, the structure of faculty meetings, the nature of teacher-administrator conversations at Canter all communicated respect for teacher autonomy and an expectation that teachers would make and accept responsibility for decisions. In contrast, these experiences at Northside communicated that teachers were not expected to make decisions. In fact they were expected to follow standard procedures, a practice that was inconsistent with Lynda's perception of herself as a teacher. Underlying these two reasons is a third. Lynda's knowledge and reflective ability was comparable to that of the administrators at Canter but was more comprehensive than that evidenced by the administrators at Northside. It seems unlikely that an administrator operating predominantly at Van Manen's (1977) first level of reflection would be able to support the development of reflective teachers. At the technical level reflection focuses on whether or not a teaching strategy or classroom activity "works" to accomplish a fixed objective (in this case, maintaining a quiet class). Much of Lynda's frustration occurred because she often operated at higher levels of reflection. Many of her curricular decisions, classroom strategies, and perceived dilemmas were based on her consideration of educational principles and practices (Van Manen's second level) and the ethical, social, and political implications of classroom practice (Van Manen's third level). Examples of this were her attempts to maintain mixed ability groups, provide a problem solving mathematics program, and a desire to help children learn about their behavioral choices and take responsibility for those choices. This meant that Lynda was more concerned with achieving her educational and ethical goals than with maintaining strict control in her classroom.

At Canter, both Lynda and the administrators often operated at Van Manen's second and third levels. For example, the administration emphasized on many occasions their desire to help low achieving children change their educational status. This commitment provides evidence of their desire to make an ethical impact in the classroom by eliminating the maintenance of a tracking system. In addition, the focus on meeting the needs of the whole child provides further evidence of the administration's consistent consideration of educational principles and practices. The administration's level of reflectivity helped Lynda to establish common meaning and understanding and enabled they to challenge and support Lynda's on-going reflection.

IMPLICATIONS: TOWARD THE DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEXTS THAT SUPPORT REFLECTIVE TEACHERS

Leadership style and school context have a pervasive impact on teacher reflection, professional development and feelings of professional worth. At Northside, the emphasis on control of teachers and students was manifested in a stress on uniform curriculum and a mandated management system, and the use of supervisory and management practices which communicated that teachers should follow established procedures rather than make professional decisions. Lynda's experiences in this context created defensiveness, lowered self-esteem, extreme dissatisfaction with teaching, and at times acquiesence to practices which violated her fundamental beliefs about teaching.

In contrast, the context at Canter stressed teacher participation in decision-making and encouraged teachers to innovate and take risks in their efforts to achieve commonly shared goals. In this environment, Lynda drew on educational literature to develop innovative practices, engaged in continuous self-assessment, and her professional self-confidence soared. In fact she described her first year at Canter as exhilarating. Her principal shared

her perspective as evidenced by his statement that she is "the best kindergarten teacher he has ever seen."

The most significant finding from this study is the amount of influence school environment has over the reflective ability and professional growth of teachers. Lynda began her year of teaching at Northside with four years of successful teaching experience and a strong knowledge base. She had a stronger professional support system than most teachers would have. Peers from graduate school and the university researcher provided emotional support and professional suggestions. Despite this, Lynda's experiences at Northside caused a high level of self-doubt and great dissatisfaction with teaching. On many occasions, Lynda seriously considered leaving the field of education. Additionally, Lynda who had been committed to the importance of teacher reflection began to question its value.

Lynda began to believe that a teacher could reflect too much, that reflection could be a hindrance to action. Lynda believed her continual consideration of moral and educational issues contributed to her frustration with teaching. Still, Lynda never stopped trying to achieve her aims. Her compliance with mandates for change always had to fit within her conceptual system. However, her need to provide conceptually grounded practice actually intensified her problems. If she had been able to ignore her knowledge and aims, she could have complied easily and would have been much happier. After further reading and a successful year of teaching at Canter, Lynda now believes that reflection can feel like a hindrance when the teacher is not empowered to act on the basis of her reflections.

This study suggests that teacher educators striving to develop reflective teachers must attend to the educational contexts in which their graduates will teach. Without supportive contexts, their reflective abilities will be washed out or they will decide to leave teaching. If Lynda barely survived as a reflective teacher in a controlling environment, a beginning teacher would be lost.

One important implication is that we should help our graduates select environments that will support professional development. This study suggests several strategies a teacher might use. During an interview, a teacher should look for a principal who discusses school philosophy and goals, who specifically mentions the importance of teacher decision-making and who asks questions (as opposed to directing and telling) about the goals and strategies of the teacher. A teacher also might ask to see minutes of previous faculty meetings and note whether faculty meetings focus on educational issues or the communication of rules and procedures. Finally, the teacher might ask about curriculum resources that are available and <u>how</u> they are used to determine whether the principal values or allows diversity in the use of curriculum resources.

A second implication is that teacher educators should work with school districts and departments of higher education to eliminate controlling school contexts. Research on teacher efficacy, effective schools, educational supervision, teacher reflection, and teacher decision-making suggests that such environments stymie the professional growth of teachers and the academic achievement of children. The environment at Northside not only constrained teacher reflection, but rewarded teachers for conformity and non-reflective practice. The organization of faculty meetings, the structure of supervisory conferences and the nature of feedback about teacher's decisions communicated an expectation that teachers not make decisions. That this contributes to the deskilling of teachers is exemplified by the fact that only one or two teachers left the school at the end of each school year and those who did remain were not dissatisfied. In fact, when Mrs. Miller retired, the faculty strongly urged the school board to provide another principal "just like Mrs. Miller." If teachers are to grow professionally, we must provide contexts that demand and reinforce growth.

However, the ultimate goal for schools is not the development of reflective teachers but the achievement of children.

Much of the concern expressed by the administrators at Northside related to issues of students learning. Yet, the students that Lynda taught, both at Northside and at Canter, achieved exceptionally well. In fact, at Northside, almost all of Lynda's students received perfect scores on the end of the year test, something that had never happened before at the school. Additionally, other kindergarten teachers at the school adopted many of Lynda's practices because they were effective with children. Given these facts, one must question whether the administration was concerned about achievement or about non-conformity.

The environment at Canter encouraged teachers to read professional literature, to experiment with instructional strategies and to evaluate their effectiveness in meeting children's academic and emotional needs. In short, Canter provided a context that supported reflective teaching and the achievement of children. Teacher educators have a responsibility to help create such environments and to help our graduates find them.

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